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The Workshop

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DECORATIVE TREATMENT OF FRAMES, WINDOWS AND PANELS.*

Though the most perfect and appropriate form for encircling and bordering any object is certainly the round or oval frame; still the decorative motives and enriched mouldings, referred to above, may equally well be applied to rectilineal, round and combined regular forms.

As for the rectilineal frame, we may point out one particular form in which the panel is not bordered in the same style on all four sides, the lower part being otherwise designed than the sides and upper part, or, in imitation of doors and window-dressings, replaced by a sill, showing other mouldings and decoration than jambs and lintel (see figs. 3—6, 8 and 9). Antique specimens of such framework are still extant, e. g., that of a window from Tivoli Temple (Supplement *B*). In the Middle Ages, during the Romanesque and Gothic periods, doors and window dressings, panels and picture-frames used to show bold jamb-mouldings ending at a certain height above the lower part or sill (figs. 3—5). During the Renaissance period either the antique style of frame-work appears, or it is returned and broken at the lower ends, showing the jamb-mouldings in section. (fig. 6.)

For basement and mezzanine windows, and for those of a certain class of buildings, such as prisons, etc., it may appear judicious to choose another proportion of height and width than usual, the latter predominating and thereby producing a sort of low and flat opening, a form which is alike suitable for dados, socles, wains-

cotings and backs of windows, in juxtaposition to the high panelling of the upper part of a wall. If, however, this flat form is chosen, attention must be paid that it be either a marked square or oblong. All those forms at the sight of which the eye is not at once struck as belonging unmistakably either to the one class or the other ought to be carefully avoided. We may also remark here, that for optical reasons more height is in reality necessary in most cases than that which is intended to be conveyed to the eye, an exact square placed at some height appearing as an oblong, and the circumference of a circle an oval. For the same reason the upper vertical part of a spire-cross must be made considerably longer than both the horizontal ones in order to appear equal to them. Hence we must conclude that, according to the height in which the panel or frame is placed, we must give more or less height to the oblong if, seen from below, it is intended to appear a square. In the same way and under the same circumstances, if we wish to see as nearly as possible an exact circle, we must make in reality an oval frame showing more height than width. It may also be suitable to use various forms of frames, squares, circles and polygons alternating with the oblong and oval if a certain number is to appear together.

With regard to the dimensions and proportions of frames we cannot hazard to give any distinct rules, they being subject to the size and importance of the framed picture, the mirror, etc. A small picture may often appear very well in a comparatively broad frame, the latter giving more weight and body to a work of in-

* See p. 161 *ante*.
The Workshop. 1869.

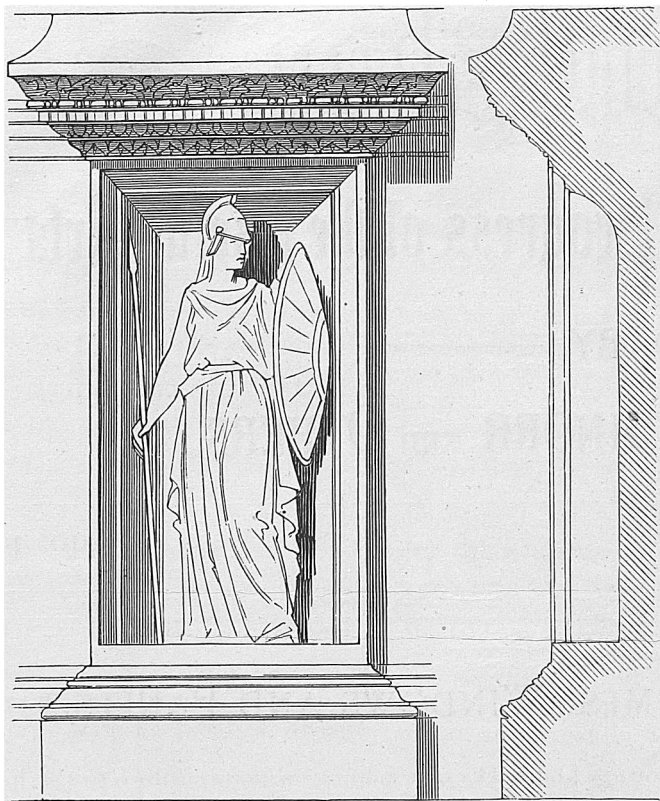


Fig. 3.

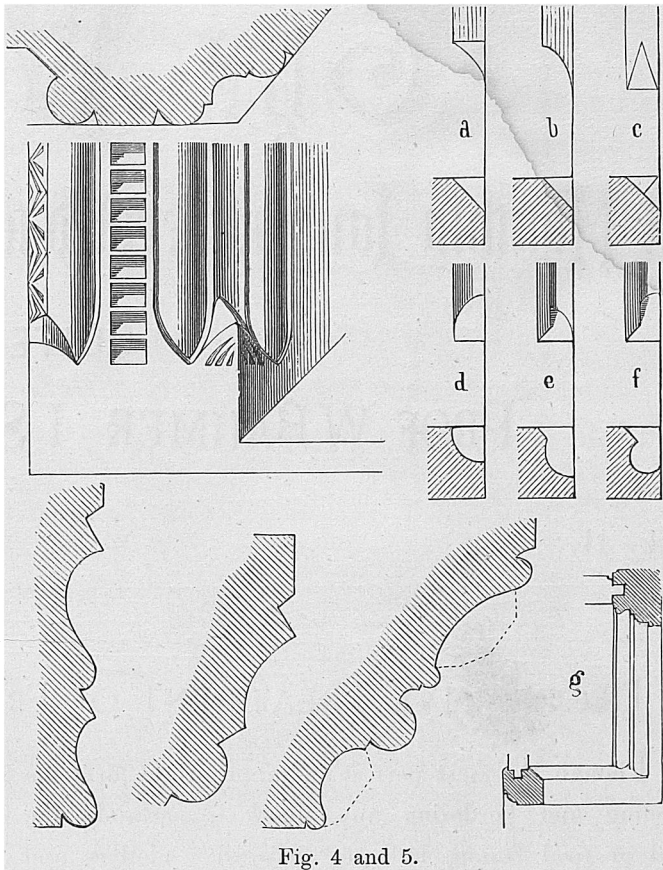


Fig. 4 and 5.

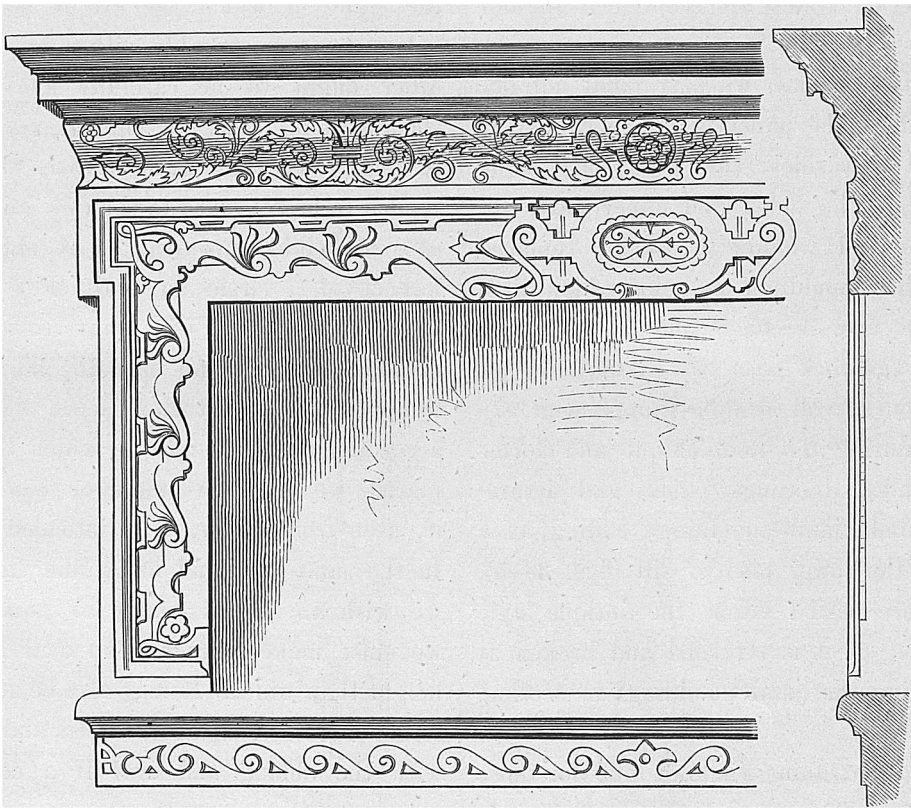


Fig. 6.

Fig. 3. Roman Niche From Nerva Temple, Rome.
Fig. 4 and 5. Romanesque and Gothic Window Dressings.
Fig. 6. Renaissance Panel from Baden Castle.

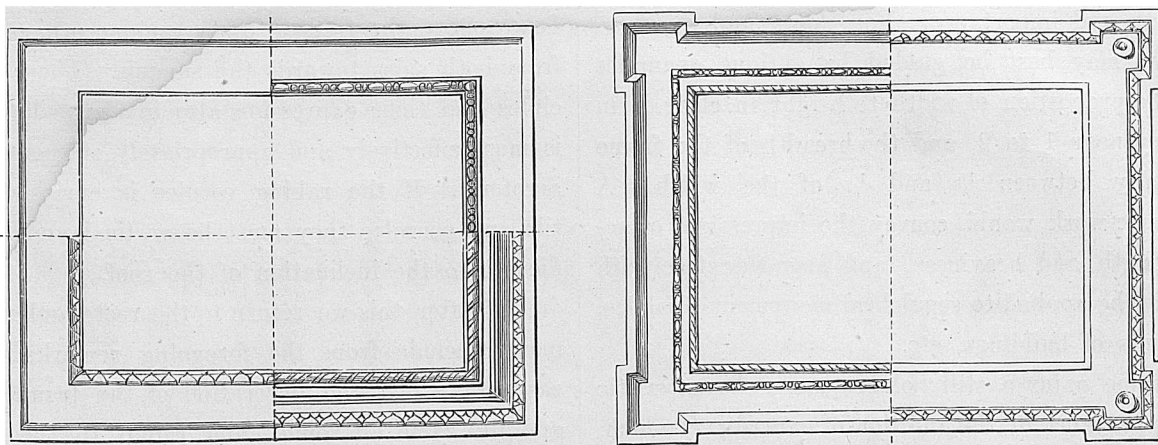


Fig. 7.

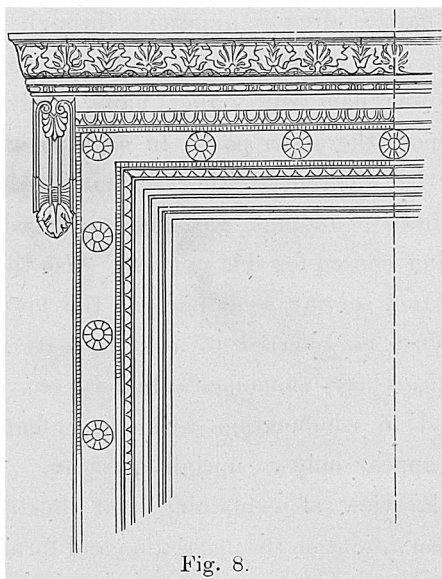


Fig. 8.

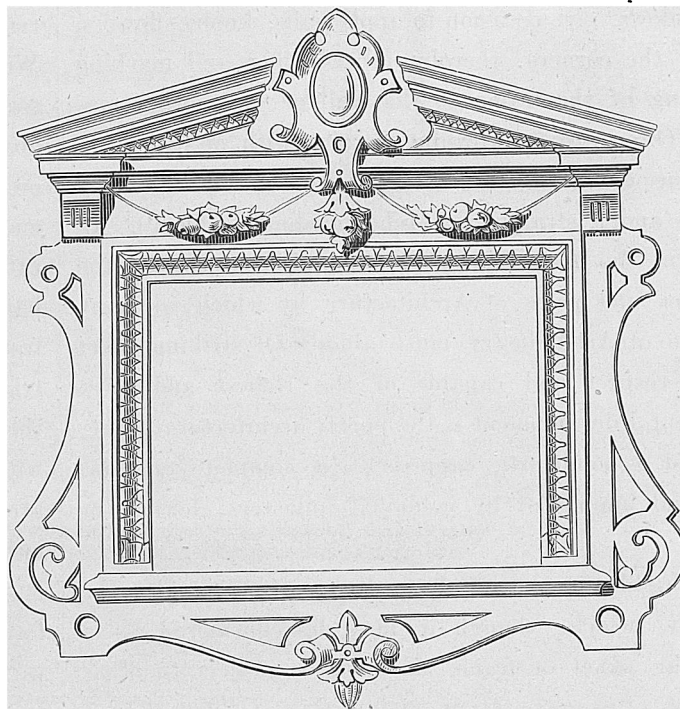


Fig. 9.

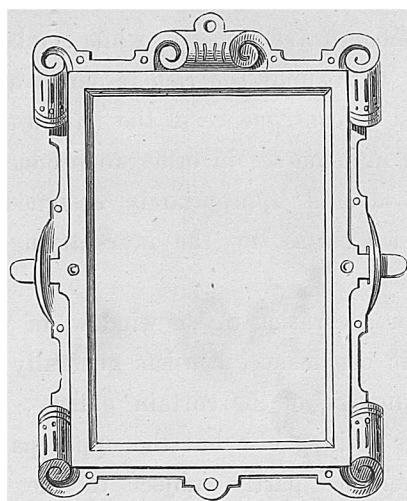


Fig. 10.

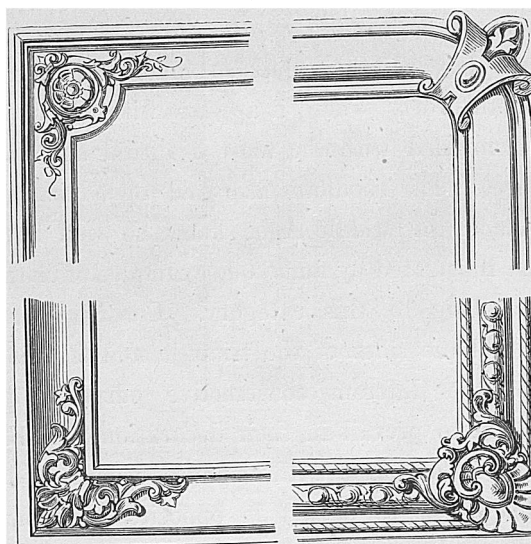


Fig. 11.

Fig. 7. Modern Frame.

Fig. 8. Detail of Grecian Door from the Erechtheion, Athens.

Fig. 9. Modern Renaissance Frame.

Fig. 10. Renaissance Panel from Rothenburg; Sixteenth Century.

Fig. 11. Modern Renaissance Frame.

trinsic worth and importance. For doors and windows however we may best be guided by antique examples in which the proportion of width to height in clear is in general very near 1 to 2, and the breadth of the frame varies usually between $\frac{1}{5}$ and $\frac{1}{7}$ of the width. A broader frame-work would convey the impression of severity, strength and heaviness, and may therefore with perfect right be applied to sepulchral monuments, castles, the basements of buildings, etc.

The frame gains a still bolder, more characteristic form and appearance by the addition of ears (fig. 7) which, originally suggested by the antique structure of doors and windows, give occasion to apply nails, knobs, flowers, etc., in the corners, thereby representing and marking the fixing of the frame to the wall or some other material. Often also a crowning cornice with or without a frieze surmounts the frame, and is further enriched by consoles and a straight or arched pediment (fig. 9). In this form the frame is unquestionably subject to the principles and rules of Architecture by which so many branches of Art-Industry must abide. Of striking effect in this respect and capable of the richest and most monumental development is the purely architectural structure and groundwork, capped by a complete entablature, and supported by columns, pilasters, hermæ or figures.

A highly important decorative feature is also the pediment, which, though it may be considered as a triangular panel or frame, is however subject to other principles of ornamentation, giving quite a different form of expression, and requiring therefore also a separate treatment. For small objects, pictures, mirrors etc., it is indeed much less suitable, but so much the more for more important works, where it appears with the tympanum, often enriched with the most beautiful and exquisite sculptures. The roodlofts also and open trusses of the roof which the Middle Ages knew so well how to decorate, as illustrated by numerous examples of charming design, belong to this category. Consisting of two rafters as oblique sides of the triangle and the tie-beam as base, the different constructive purposes of these features are to prevail in their decoration. If the tie-beam, e. g., is enriched with running ornament of some sort, this ought to depart in opposite directions from the middle and never the reverse. If high enough, it may have two frets one above the other and running both in opposite directions; but any upright fluting or chamfering would be entirely out of place for the decoration of the tie-beam. The rafters, if decorated in the same way, must, in harmony with their constructive ten-

dency, have the frets or other running ornament directed from both sides towards the summit. These same principles find their expression also in the pediment, which is most effectively and appropriately surmounted by the acroteria. If the raking cornice is enriched with dentils and consoles they must be vertical and not perpendicular to the inclination of the roof.

If after this we return to the rectangular frame, we may conclude from the foregoing remarks that in all cases in which the decoration of the frame is not one and the same all round, and radial to the panel, the upper and lower parts must be clearly marked and differently treated, according to their own peculiar character. With regard to the upper part the principles to be observed are partly already apparent through the above observations, and we shall recur to them again further on. The lower part will either hang freely on both ends or support the upper part. In each case the decoration will be different, either festoons and floating bands, or plinth mouldings, strongly interlaced patterns, frets etc. being chosen for this purpose. Also the hanging triangular panel serving sometimes as the lower part of the frame must be referred to as it appears frequently with windows, reliefs, monumental tablets, etc. If figures are employed in combination with these features they must again appear only in upright position.

With the view of explaining and illustrating the foregoing observations on the decoration and form of frame, we give, Supplement *B*, some examples of antique frame-mouldings, and at *C* some others, dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and being characteristic specimens of the different classes they are to represent. We hope that modern Art-Industry, while emulating only good examples, will employ the rich resources over which it has command in consequence of the immense increase of international intercourse, in order to produce also in this branch good and appropriately designed frames, without being led astray by the ever-varying taste of fashion.

The interior decoration of the window, of which we wish to speak in conclusion, consists generally, besides drapery and hangings, of the curtain gallery, which is strictly speaking nothing else but the upper part of the frame, and therefore partly subject to the constructive and decorative laws pointed out above. Still it has its own peculiar character, by which it distinguishes itself and which must bear upon its form and ornamentation. It is hardly constructive necessity but rather decorative considerations which prevail here; it has only to bear its own weight and that of the hangings, lies free on

both ends, and its dimensions are again regulated rather by æsthetic reasons, the eye requiring, besides proper supports of some description on both ends, a good proportion of the height to its length and to the size and form of the window. The curtain gallery surmounts the interior window, just as the exterior is crowned by the cap or pediment. Elegant mouldings, crowning members, judiciously designed with regard to the indistinct light in which they appear, are of good effect here, (Supplement *D*, excl. *D. I.*); zones or bands with crowning cornice and enriched with frets, meanders and other textile motives, honey-suckle, egg and dart ornament, bead-rolls, etc., are therefore very appropriate and effective decorative features for the enrichment of the gallery, especially when relieved by color and gold. But we cannot approve of the meaningless, ungraceful *lambrequins*, so often seen in modern chamber decoration, with clasps in the middle, behind which the crowning cornice cannot be discovered; or of heavy and massive mouldings the ornamentation of which is frequently without any intrinsic bearing to their relation and meaning. (Supple-

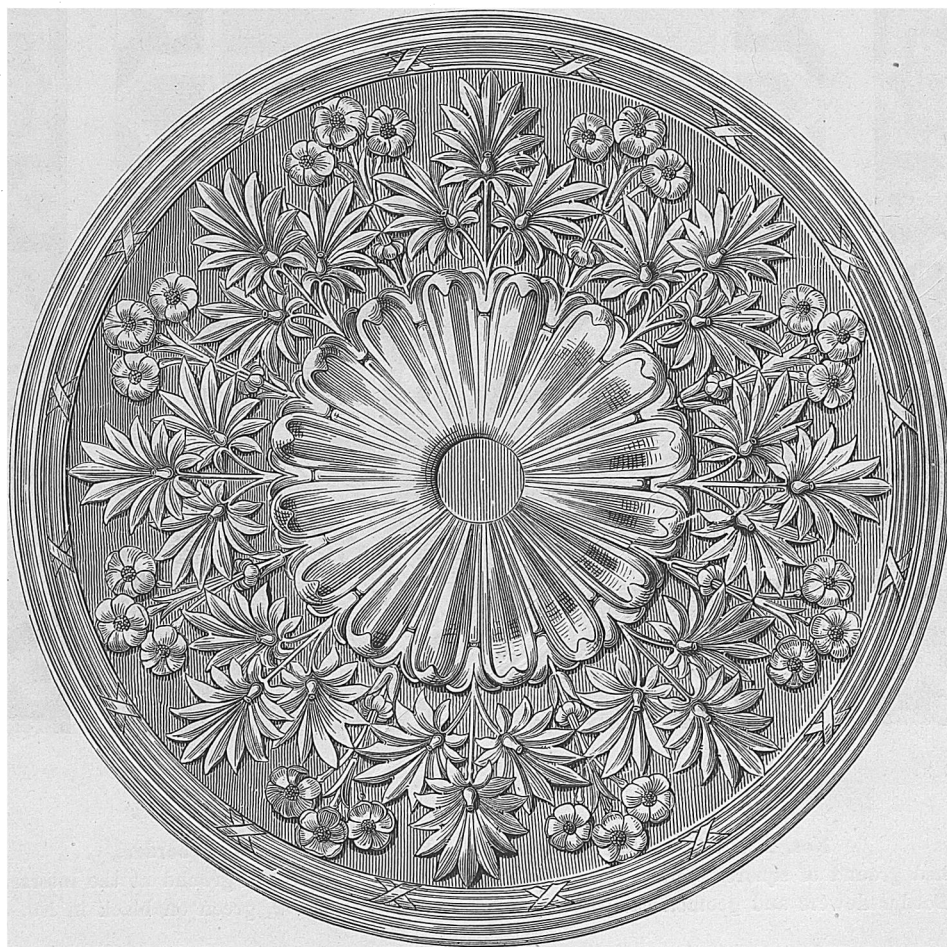
ment *D. I.*) As examples for suggestion, and as illustrations of the foregoing remarks we refer to Supplement *C*, and fig. 2 of last Part of the *Workshop*. Still the decorative treatment of the gallery will always depend on the hangings, according to their being more or less heavy.

We conclude by enumerating the different styles of curtain galleries.

1. Simple mouldings, polished or gilt; crowning members.
2. Poles supported by brackets.
3. Cornice with or without consoles.
4. Cornice with frieze or architrave, if of great width divided in the middle, often surmounted by acroteria.
5. Cornice as before, and decorated with drapery and cords, rich stuff sometimes fancifully cut, and the lighter curtains beneath with appropriate pattern falling in rich folds.

The same remarks apply as well to door hangings and galleries.

SPECIMENS OF ORNAMENTATION.



No. 1. Modern Ceiling-Flower.